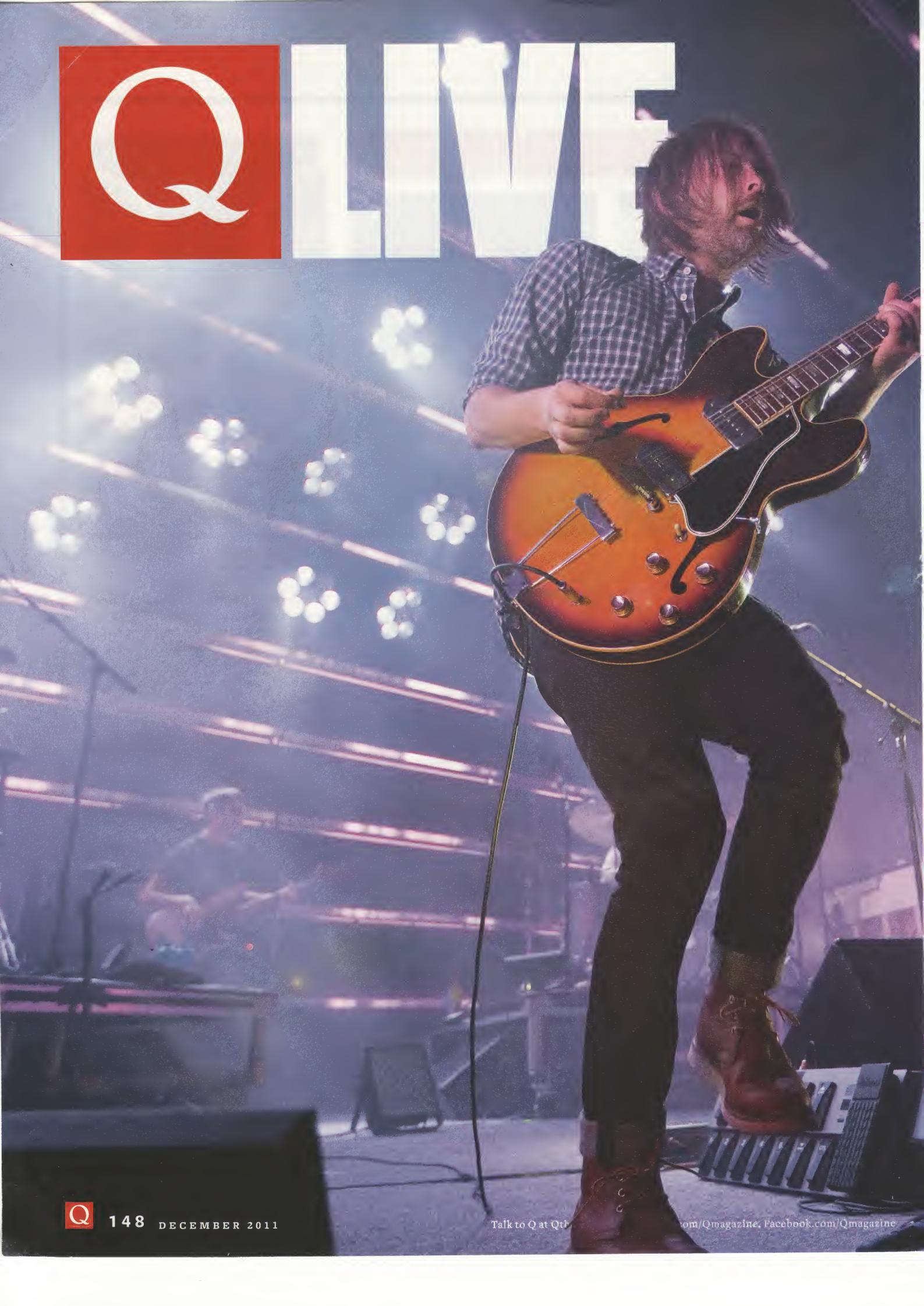


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LIVE





Radiohead: Thom didn't want to admit it, but he'd been waiting to do a guitar solo for years.

RADIOHEAD

The kings of reinvention triumph at intimate show in the Big Apple.

ROSELAND BALLROOM, NEW YORK
THURSDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2011

★★★★

For proof of Radiohead's enduring broad appeal, you only need glance around the audience that makes up their two-night stand at New York's Roseland Ballroom. Kid Rock is spotted cheerily singing along, MGMT's Andrew VanWyngarden and Ben Goldwasser are seen jostling for a good spot and the presence of Scarlett Johansson is adding some A-list glamour to the guestlist. But none of these celebrity fans get more than a passing mention among the 3500-strong audience. Instead, the most prominent pre-show topic of discussion is what happened inside this venue, located in NYC's theatre district, 18 months ago. It was back then that Thom Yorke ascended to the Roseland's well-trodden stage to play with his new group Atoms For Peace. The band – comprising Red Hot Chili Pepper Flea, sometime R.E.M./Beck drummer Joey Waronker, percussionist Mauro Refosco and long-term Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich – proceeded to transform Yorke's debut solo album, *The Eraser*, from a jittery collection of electronic sketches into a set of pulsing, writhing, polyrhythmic brilliance. Save for a mid-show solo set, during which the singer premiered as-yet-uncompleted songs such as *The Daily Mail* and *Staircase*, and twisted new forms out of the Oxford outfit's back catalogue, the show was very different to anything Yorke had previously indulged in.

Yorke's wildly animated performances with Atoms For Peace indicated he was having way too much fun to revert to type when Radiohead reconvened, and the Krautrock grind of his side-project, if you can call it that, looms large here. It's a shame more were not privy to what Atoms For Peace did during their sporadic touring because, if nothing else, it gives the abstract, icy thrum of Radiohead's latest album, *The King Of Limbs*, a rightful context.

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'Head fellows:
(above) Colin Greenwood was really confused about which drummer to face; **(left)** disappointed fans could console themselves with a trip to Jersey Boys; **(right)** Phil Selway, looking pretty smug that he's managed to clone himself.

Tonight, the second of two shows in the city, the seeds planted by Atoms For Peace blossom beautifully within Radiohead's latest incarnation.

Aside from their surprise Glastonbury set this summer, this brace of shows represents their first live engagements of 2011. Even Radiohead aren't immune to nerves and a round of unsure looks circulates onstage early on, the tension giving opener Bloom and the creeping, insidious groove of Little By Little an added dramatic edge. The anxiety extends into a rendition of Staircase, an unreleased song still evolving from the solo version Yorke aired during the Atoms For Peace jaunt but which now features chilly, synthesized atmospherics. Like much of the material on their eighth album, it offers a starring role to Colin Greenwood, the bassist's taut, kinetic grooves at the core of their new material, a succession of spongy bass riffs seeing him edging out his much-revered brother Jonny in terms of muso showiness.

It's on a blistering Feral that Radiohead really begin to hit their stride. The double-drum attack of twin baldies Phil Selway and extra sticksman Clive Deamer (moonlighting from his work with Portishead) create a bristling wall of beats that launches Yorke into his first interpretive dance of

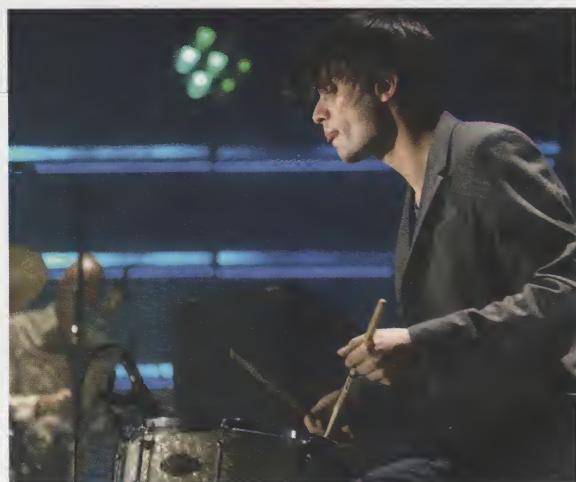
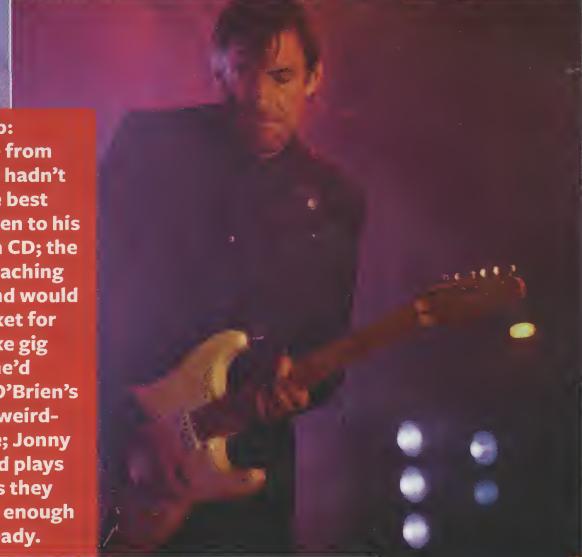
THE SEEDS PLANTED BY THOM YORKE'S ATOMS FOR PEACE SIDE-PROJECT BLOSSOM BEAUTIFULLY WITHIN RADIOHEAD'S LATEST INCARNATION.

the evening, his flailing-limb octopus impression now a more controlled, almost choreographed set of upper-body movements.

After this early onslaught of new material, the sextet finally allow themselves to fall into the safety net of their past and give a gorgeous, piano-led version of Subterranean Homesick Alien its first airing for a decade. The ripples of excitement that flow through the room during its serene intro soon peter out, though, the chasm between the all-conquering rock behemoth of Radiohead circa 1997 and the agile, autonomous modern-day trailblazers all too apparent. OK Computer may



Live & Limb: (clockwise from left) Thom hadn't chosen the best time to listen to his meditation CD; the man approaching from behind would swap a ticket for the bespoke gig artwork she'd made; Ed O'Brien's making-a-weird-sound face; Jonny Greenwood plays drums. Cos they don't have enough drums already.



be cemented in alt-rock history, but in the hands of Radiohead 2011, *Subterranean Homesick Alien* feels like a perfectly preserved but ultimately useless relic.

More in keeping with their reinventionist approach, most of the other staples from their back catalogue get a King Of Limbs-esque revamp. *Everything In Its Right Place* is the most obvious beneficiary of the Selway/Deamer combination, spiralling into an hypnotic groove. *15 Step*, meanwhile, now boasts a genuine rhythmic power to match the marching band-assisted rendition they did at the Grammys three years ago.

As Yorke settles down behind the piano again to begin *The Daily Mail*, another unreleased new song, he turns his attention to a conversation taking place in the front row. Leaning into the microphone with a barbed smile, he says, "It's alright, it's Thursday night, you can talk." It's exactly the sort of mischievous humour that, via numerous chat show appearances during their short stay Stateside, have had US audiences in raptures. Conversely, at the time of writing, there's been no UK press; have the band who squirmed their way through a series of TV interviews in *Meeting People Is Easy* learned to love America more than their homeland?

Yorke certainly seems more comfortable than he has for some time, but while he appears to be the chief protagonist in the latest paradigm shift in Radiohead's evolution, the execution is carried out far more evenly. As tonight enters its final throes, reminders of Radiohead's power when their individual parts unite come thick and fast. *Morning Mr Magpie* builds into a jagged roar of noise that becomes so dense by the song's end that only something akin to telepathy can possibly

be holding it together. A vicious take on *Bodysnatchers* also shows that they haven't lost the ability to communicate in the more primal language of rock'n'roll either, but it's with a staggering version of *Supercollider* that Radiohead spell out their collective prowess most effectively. The electro ballad – released for Record Store Day 2011 – sounded like a post-'00s homage to Depeche Mode on vinyl but here the subtle input of the brothers Greenwood, guitarist Ed O'Brien, Selway and Deamer push it gently into a simmering, celestial anthem.

It's been a long, protracted incubation that has involved all kinds of musical infidelity and required Atoms For Peace to act as a secret surrogate mother. But Radiohead have emerged reborn and revitalised; British rock has its most errant and exciting offspring back. **ROD WILBA**

SETLIST

- » Bloom
- » Little By Little
- » Staircase
- » The National Anthem
- » Feral
- » Subterranean Homesick Alien
- » Like Spinning Plates
- » All I Need
- » True Love Waits/ Everything In Its Right Place
- » 15 Step
- » Weird Fishes/ Arpeggi
- » Lotus Flower
- » Codex
- » The Daily Mail
- » Morning Mr Magpie
- » Reckoner
- » Give Up The Ghost
- » Myxomatosis
- » Bodysnatchers
- » Supercollider
- » Nude